

D. Burdick 2010

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

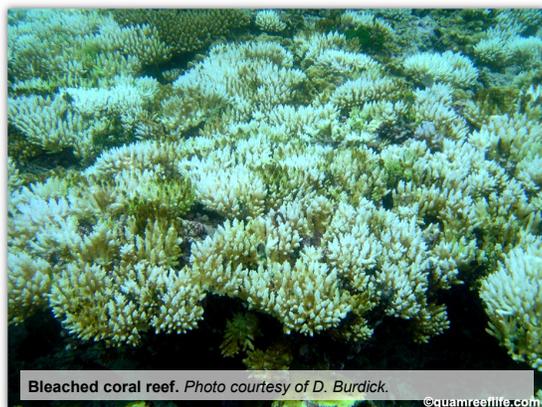
(CNMI) are 14 islands extending over 600 kilometers in the western Pacific. CNMI is one of the original members of the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC).

Coral Reefs

Coral reefs here are very important because they provide traditional and subsistence uses, production of commercial food products, recreational opportunities for a healthy tourism economy, physical protection of the coastal zone from storms, diversity, rarity, and uniqueness of life forms, and, educational and research uses. Coral reefs also are an important part of CNMI's cultural heritage.



Coral reef near Saipan. Photo courtesy of D. Burdick.



Bleached coral reef. Photo courtesy of D. Burdick.

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Threats

Growing population and development over the past decade has increased threats to coral reef ecosystems in CNMI and led to the destruction and reduced health of coral reefs and coral reef-associated habitats. These effects are most noticeable on the island of Saipan, where approximately 90 percent of CNMI's population resides. Because of this, most coral reef management efforts have focused on

Saipan. The CNMI government considers coral reef ecosystem conservation and management a high-priority concern.

The decline in coral reef coverage and marine health threatens all of the needed benefits that coral reefs provide to CNMI, including tourism, fisheries, and coastal protection.

Agencies

In CNMI there are three primary agencies involved in coral reef-related issues and activities: Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Coastal Resources Management (CRM), and Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW).

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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For more information:

Actions

The CNMI's Coral Reef Management Priorities and Local Action Strategies (LAS) were developed through a coordinated effort between DEQ, CRM, and DFW along with stakeholder input. CNMI's Priorities and LAS serve as tools to encourage stewardship towards coastal resource protection and restoration. Our priorities and LAS include: Land-based sources of pollution, fishery management, climate change, recreational use, public outreach and awareness, and coral resources management. Below are a few example activities:

Land-based Sources of Pollution

- Road and drainage improvements and revegetation efforts in the Laolao Bay Watershed with stakeholder and interagency collaboration
- Revegetate the Talakhaya Watershed to minimize soil erosion and runoff into nearby coastal waters
- Rain gardens to engage community in stormwater projects in CNMI
- Laolao Bay Pride Campaign focused on inspiring local communities to adopt healthy practices on land



Fishery Management

- Banned gillnet and SCUBA spear fishing and increased enforcement in marine protected areas
- L50 Size Matters — Fisheries Size At Maturity And Responsible Catch Campaign
- *Rare Pride Campaign* (a social marketing campaign) focused on sustainable fishing practices and MPA awareness in the Managaha Sanctuary



Climate Change

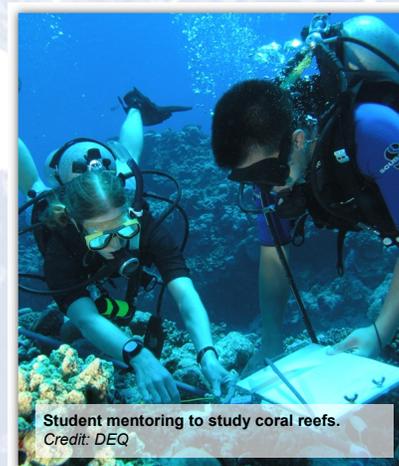
- Climate Change Working Group addresses climate change adaptation around CNMI.
- Reef Resiliency Studies
- Vulnerability Assessment

Public Outreach and Awareness

- Ongoing summer internship program, for post-secondary students, in natural resource and coral reef management
- *Ridge to Reef Camp* Program for teachers and students
- Community-wide events, such as the Environmental Expo, International Coastal Cleanup, Think Blue Program, First Friday Films
- Micronesia Challenge Communications Group "*CNMI Organizations for Conservation Outreach or COCO*"

Coral Resources Management

- Long-term Marine Monitoring Program
- Developed Conservation Action Plans (CAP) for Laolao Bay, Talakhaya and Garapan Watersheds to address management priorities



U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) Member
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